
NEWS From:

Congressman Mike Honda

FIFTEENTH DISTRICT - CALIFORNIA



For Immediate Release
April 8, 2002

Contact: Ernest Baynard (202) 225-2631

Honda Commemorates 60th Anniversary of Bataan Death March by
Holding an Intergenerational Forum with POWs At Leland HS in San Jose
US POWs Share Stories, Lessons Learned with Honda, SJ Students

San Jose, CA—To commemorate tomorrow's National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, U.S. Congressman Mike Honda (D-San Jose) and Bay Area former POWs today brought two generations of Americans together to better understand the importance of the American POW experience and Bataan Death March 60 years later. The panel discussion between a group of the last remaining Bay Area survivors of the Bataan Death March and 90 Leland High School sophomores was moderated by Honda after the Silicon Valley legislator gave a presentation on the historic Death March, which claimed the lives of over 700 American servicemen in the days following the fall of Bataan on April 9, 1942. Thousands more Americans perished while being transported on inhumane "Hell Ships" to Japan and while working as slave laborers in Japanese factories until the end of the war.

"While holidays and ceremonies such as 'National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day' are important, it is more important that each of us remember the courage of our veterans and POWs every day, in our minds, and in our hearts, as we enjoy the freedoms afforded us by their service and sacrifice," said Honda. **"The ranks of American heroes that fought and survived captivity during World War II are getting thinner by the day—it is essential that younger generations of Americans learn their story so the 21st century will not be wrought with the atrocities and injustices of the last century."**

"The numbers of those of us who survived the Japanese attack upon the Philippines at the outset of the War in the Pacific are shrinking rapidly," said panelist Frank Muther of Salinas, Western States Commander of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor. **"It is essential that our young people, who are the future of our nation, understand the sacrifices made by those of us who came before, so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the last century and ensure that our veterans and former POWs are treated properly by the next generation of leaders in our country."**

Prior to the presentation and panel discussion, Honda met privately with the former POWs to discuss the progress of his bill, the *"Justice for United States Prisoners of War Act,"* an internationally recognized bill that would allow American military POWs to sue Japanese companies in U.S. state or federal court for losses and injuries sustained during the time they were imprisoned and forced into slave labor. Honda, a third generation Japanese American who was interned with his family in Amache, Colorado, during World War II, has led the effort to afford Pacific Theatre U.S. World War II POWs their day in court.